

**WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
PROGRAM OF DISTINCTION**

**ACTION
Agenda Item G
March 20, 2000**

Recommendation:

That the Council allocate an additional \$400,000 for fiscal year 1999-2000 from the Regional University Excellence Trust Fund to Western Kentucky University's program of distinction in Applied Research and Technology to support increased activity within the program's existing centers and the creation of a new center in astronomy. The funds are reserved for WKU's use. WKU has indicated that the funds will be used in non-recurring expenditures. They will not become part of the recurring base for the program of distinction in Applied Research and Technology.

Discussion:

The \$400,000 is money that was left in the Regional University Excellence Trust Fund when the program of distinction was approved at the July 13, 1998, Council meeting. WKU wishes to use this money to take advantage of opportunities available to its Applied Research and Technology program.

As required, WKU will match the \$400,000 with \$400,000 from a \$1,000,000 NASA grant awarded to the university for fiscal year 1999-2000 entitled "Starbase Network: Students Training for Achievement in Research Based on Analytical Space-Science Experiences." WKU certifies that the NASA grant money is already on deposit at the university and that the grant is eligible in accordance with federal and Council guidelines to match the incentive trust fund money.

The additional funding will accelerate development of the program's existing centers. With it, the program proposes to:

- Recruit more students.
- Add more faculty mentors so that undergraduates get more research experience and graduate students improve their teaching skills.
- Revise curricula to ensure that all students have out-of-classroom learning experiences.
- Create a joint venture between the centers for biotechnology and agriculture research to help develop the workforce for agriculture-related biotechnology.
- Purchase laboratory equipment needed for projects that will give students additional applied research experience.

The additional funding also will support the creation of a new center in astronomy, already begun with the NASA grant. The center will conform to the Council-approved purpose, goals, and evaluation criteria for the program.

Awarding the \$400,000 would mean that WKU has \$823,000 left allocated but not designated and awarded in the Regional University Excellence Trust Fund. WKU plans to apply soon for some or all of the remaining amount to support a program of distinction in journalism.

To support its request, WKU will report briefly on the status of its program of distinction in Applied Research and Technology. The report also stems from the Council's review of all programs of distinction as discussed in Agenda Item C-3 at the January 24, 2000, Council meeting. The report is fourth in the series of institutional presentations, following the January 24 reports by Morehead State University, Eastern Kentucky University, and Murray State University.

Staff Preparation by Daniel A. Rabuzzi